How to work with Academic Mentor Programs

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Who is OSE and what do we do?

The Office of the Secretary for Education is responsible for advising and making policy recommendations to the Governor on education issues. The Office of the Secretary also administers three programs: the Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program, READ California and the Governor's Reading Award Program. The Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program oversees grants to local mentoring programs and has as its goal the development of a statewide plan to match every child in need with an academic mentor. READ California is a statewide public engagement campaign to promote reading. The Governor's Reading Award program is a reading competition for schools with students in grades K-8, in which cash awards are given to schools whose students have read the greatest number of pages.

How much money in the Governor's budget is allocated to the OSE, AVMSP?

The Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program (AVMSP) administers $10 million in local assistance grants to local education agencies (LEAs) which include school districts and county offices of education. The Governor's proposed budget for FY 2001-02 includes a $5 million augmentation of the AVMSP for a total of $15 in local assistance grants. Currently, the AVMSP funds 104 LEAs and serves students with mentors at nearly 300 school sites. The $5 million augmentation would allow OSE to provide grant funds to an additional 50-60 LEAs to serve 10,000 more students with mentors.

What is the Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program?

The Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program (AVMSP) is charged with the goal of matching every child who needs one with an academic mentor. To accomplish this, the Governor's Office, Office of the Secretary for Education (OSE) administers $10 million annually in local assistance grants to recruit volunteer mentors to work with at-risk children in the school setting. Mentors provide academic guidance, role modeling, and companionship to students who need motivation and encouragement. Over 145 school-based mentor programs in California have received funding through this program since 1996, with 18,000 mentors serving 15,000-20,000 students each year.

What is the Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program Directory?

The 2000-2001 AVMSP Directory contains all school districts, county offices of education, and school sites currently receiving funds for academic mentoring from the Office of the Secretary for Education. The directory is organized first by county, next by school district or county office of education, and lastly by school site.

How do I work with schools included in the AVMSP Directory?

If you are interested in working with a school contained in the AVMSP Directory, call the contact person listed for that school directly. This person will be able to provide you with specific information on how you can partner with their local program.

How do schools get in the AVMSP Directory?

Selection for participation in the AVMSP is based on a highly competitive bid process. Each applicant is required to submit a funding proposal that clearly articulates the need for an academic mentoring program in a school environment and address the ten AVMSP Program Quality Standards of effective academic mentoring programs. To ensure accountability and on-going compliance with the AVMSP Program Quality Standards, awardees are required to submit results-based quarterly reports and are subject to site visits from the OSE program staff.

Applications for the next round of funding will become available for download online at www.ose.ca.gov in mid-April. Applicants will have approximately six weeks to submit a complete application for review by readers who represent local academic mentor programs, local education agencies, community-based mentor programs, and other interested parties.

What are the AVMSP Program Quality Standards?

Government Code Section 96102, Statutes of 1992 requires the Office of the Secretary for Education to implement ten state standards for the AVMSP. While mentoring programs using these standards will have a common programmatic core, their approach will vary depending on how the standards are implemented in the overall design of the program.

Standard #1: *An effective academic mentoring program develops criteria to identify student mentees.*

There is a process of mentee identification that:
- Defines specific criteria for identifying mentees who would most likely benefit from a mentor-mentee relationship.
- Includes a procedure for identifying mentees. *Include the grade levels of students targeted for service.*
- Incorporates input from students, staff and others in the school community.

Standard #2: *An effective academic mentoring program assesses individual student needs and develops strategies for improving student performance.*

There is a process for assessing individual student need that:
- Gathers relevant and specific data to adequately assess individual student need.

- Incorporates information from a variety of sources, including students, staff, family, and other stakeholders in the school community.
- Identifies specific problem areas with student performance that need improvement.
- Identifies the strengths of the student upon which an academic mentoring strategy can be built.

There is a process for developing specific strategies to improve student performance that:
- Involves students, family, teachers and staff.
- Targets specific academic areas.
- Addresses non-academic student performance issues.
- Includes a means to assess the effectiveness of each strategy.

Standard #3: *An effective academic mentoring program follows a well-designed plan for recruiting mentors.*

There is a well-designed recruitment plan that:
- Establishes partnerships with community groups, businesses and service organizations to provide avenues for mentors to volunteer at school settings.
- Implements a year-round marketing and public awareness campaign.
- Identifies a sufficient number of potential mentors to facilitate the process of finding the right match with mentees.

Standard #4: *An effective academic mentoring program follows a detailed plan for selecting and a thorough procedure for screening every mentor.*

There is a detailed selection plan that:
- Develops criteria for selecting mentors that meet the needs of the student population.
- Requires an application process that includes a personal interview.
- Selects mentors able to make the minimum commitment of time required by the program.

There is a thorough screening procedure that:
- Requires all volunteers and mentors to undergo the same criminal and health checks that school employees are subject to prior to employment.

Standard #5: *An effective academic mentoring program establishes an orientation program for mentors, mentees and other interested parties.*

There is an orientation program that:
- Presents an overview of the mentoring program.
- Introduces the responsibilities and the level of commitment expected of each participant.
- Provides written program materials explaining program policies and procedures.

Standard #6: *An effective academic mentoring program develops and institutes an on-going training and support plan for all mentors.*

There is a comprehensive on-going training plan that:
- Provides training on establishing and sustaining a meaningful mentor-mentee relationship.
- Helps mentors develop communication skills to understand the student and relate to their circumstances and culture.
- Teaches mentors to identify and build upon the strengths of the student and to support and acknowledge the student's accomplishments.

There is an on-going support plan that:
- Involves school personnel, program staff and others in supporting mentors and mentees.
- Provides on-going peer support for mentors.
- Supports mentors in addressing mentor-mentee relationship problems.

Standard #7: *An effective academic mentoring program develops and implements an explicit matching strategy for mentees and mentors.*

There is an explicit matching strategy that:
- Articulates a matching rationale.
- Employs appropriate criteria that address the needs and preferences of mentees.
- Ensures that both parties understand and agree to the conditions of the match and the mentoring relationship.

Standard #8: *An effective academic mentoring program ensures on-going monitoring and supervision of the mentor-mentee relationship.*

There is an on-going monitoring and supervision system that:
- Establishes written policies and procedures for the supervision of the mentor-mentee relationship. *Indicate the physical environment in which mentoring will occur.*
- Provides periodic checks on the progress of the mentor-mentee relationship and methods for making adjustments to mentoring strategies.
- Ensures appropriate steps to close the mentor-mentee relationship.

Standard #9: *An effective academic mentoring program recognizes mentor and mentee contributions and achievement.*

There is a recognition program that:
- Identifies multiple recognition strategies, which validate mentor contributions and mentee achievements.
- Promotes public and media awareness of program accomplishments.

- Recognizes businesses and community partnerships for their contributions to mentoring.
- Hosts recognition events and social gatherings.

Standard #10: An *effective academic mentoring program evaluates whether the program is successful in improving individual student performance and achievement.*

There is an evaluation process that:
- Tracks the number of students served, the number of mentors serving students, the frequency, duration and total hours of the mentoring relationship, and the retention of mentors.
- Maintains that participant students (mentees) meet with their mentors for a period of not less than 15 hours during one academic quarter to be counted toward annual service goal accomplishments.
- Identifies specific student performance and achievement outcomes.
- Develops indicators for measuring specific outcomes, including but not limited to, demographic data, grade point average, test scores, attendance (number of days attended divided by number of school days per year), and discipline (referrals and suspensions). Awardees will be required to submit data as specified in the Evaluation Report Format. *If any barriers exist for collecting the required data, explain and describe your program's plan to provide like measures.*
- Includes data for a comparison group, preferably a random assignment, matched pair or cut-off criteria design. *Explain the methodology to be used for identifying comparison group students.*
- Develops attitudinal surveys for mentored students.
- Defines a procedure for collecting data to measure specific outcomes.

Can I work with a school not contained in the AVMSP Directory?

Yes! However, you want to make sure that they are in compliance with the CMI Quality Assurance Standards. One great example of a partnership between a state agency and a school that is not funded by OSE is the Franchise Tax Board School Partnership Program. Please call 916-845-5397 for more information.